

Making healthy changes in worksite vending machines: "Lessons learned"

[Amy Ellings](#), Nutrition Consultant, Washington State Department of Health

Tips on having a successful healthy vending program:

- Start small- make 30-35% of your vending machine healthy to begin with. Depending on your vending machine size, this is usually the last three columns.
- Stock healthy snacks in columns, not rows.
- Label the columns or the items that are healthy. Alternatively (may not be as effective) have a list of the healthy items that are likely to be in the vending machine.
- Advertise, advertise, advertise. Market the healthy snack program in employee newsletters, posters near the snack machine, and in break rooms, etc. Without this component, items probably won't sell as well. Also, see if the company will supply free samples of the healthy products for staff meetings.
- **Monitor closely.** If you put labels on that denote healthy items, they have to be correct or you will be breaking the law. Someone must be assigned to check this regularly or this will not work. Decide on a process to notify the delivery person if you are or are not satisfied.
- Meet with the vending company at least quarterly to see what items are being stocked in their warehouse. Modify all product lists accordingly.

Meet with vending representative:

- Tell them what you want.
- Modify your contract to state that you want 30-35% of the snacks in your vending machine to be healthy.

Build a relationship with delivery person:

- Tell them why it is important to put healthy items in the machine.
- Train them on reading a nutrition label.
- Keep a list inside the machine of what items can go in the slots.
- Let them know that if they do not fill the slots, the product will not sell.
- Listen to their concerns and address them.
- Make sure the company lets you know if there is a different delivery person.

Know some of the delivery person's concerns:

- Commission—They are concerned that putting healthy foods in the machines will decrease sales.
- Stocking system—Your delivery person is in a hurry. They grab product from the main warehouse in the morning and put whatever they have in the machines. They use experience to know what to put in each machine.

What's going on in Washington State?

- Healthy vending initiative started in Clark County.
- A toolkit will be out in winter 2007-2008.
- Might pilot state-wide healthy vending program in spring 2008 (currently looking for statewide organization to house; will be looking for test sites this fall).